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25X1

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SECRET

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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

VIETNAM: Situation report. (Page 1)

EGYPT-USSR: Egyptian misgivings about the Soviets.
(Page 3)

LAOS: Rightist resolution fails (Page 4)

MALAGASY REPUBLIC: Situation report (Page 4)

WEST GERMANY: The Eastern treaties (Page 4)

SECRET



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VIETNAM: Government forces successfully parried several sharp probing attacks by the enemy over the weekend.

South Vietnamese Marines turned back a series of enemy tank and ground attacks yesterday against the government's defense line along the Quang Tri - Thua Thien provincial border with the help of heavy allied air strikes and naval gunfire. Sporadic clashes are continuing, but the South Vietnamese reportedly are now in control of the situation. Similar Communist attacks were made near Kontum City in the central highlands and were also repulsed.

At An Loc, Communist forces conducted several strong attacks against South Vietnamese forces moving up from south of the town, but they were driven off with the help of massive allied air strikes. The assaults, launched by tank-led regimental-sized units, have abated and some elements of the South Vietnamese relief force have moved to within two miles of the town.

The Communists' strategy for An Loc has undoubtedly been upset, but they do not yet appear ready to give up. Despite a lackluster performance by many elements of An Loc's defenders and the relief forces, the resistance has nevertheless held against the Communist assaults, and the massive use of allied air power throughout the offensive has inflicted heavy losses on Communist forces. All evidence indicates that Communist planners did not expect to be stopped. They apparently counted on being able to take An Loc quickly and from there to join other forces for a push toward Saigon. They thus appear to have had no contingency plans and to have been unable or unwilling to change tactics.

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22 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

1

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North Vietnamese editorialists are mixing dire warnings and high praise about the support of Hanoi's allies abroad. A "commentator" article published in the official army newspaper on 21 May directs invective at President Nixon that is meant to make those "socialists" who might be considering dealing with him as uncomfortable as possible. On the same day, however, Hanoi's regular daily newspaper took a completely different line, expressing the regime's profound gratitude for the support of its allies, especially the Soviet Union. The paper also points out that North Vietnam has awarded posthumous citations to the Soviet sailors who, Hanoi charges, were killed in recent US air strikes.

Many of Hanoi's domestic readers may regard such contradictory press play with puzzlement, but the regime undoubtedly is less concerned with reaction on the home front than with that of the Soviets. The North Vietnamese leaders appear to be trying to underscore their concern about a possible slackening of Soviet support as a result of the Moscow summit, without giving public offense to the Soviets. Moreover, by emphasizing Soviet casualties and damage to Soviet ships, Hanoi doubtless hopes to put pressure on Kremlin leaders before Soviet and world opinion. [REDACTED]

25X1

22 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

2

~~SECRET~~

EGYPT-USSR: Egyptian misgivings about Soviet policy in the Middle East, and concern over the outcome of the US-USSR summit, have again surfaced.

On Friday the semi-official Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, published the minutes of a forum on the Moscow summit which reflected criticism of the Soviet Union as well as the US. The main theme of the meeting appeared to be anxiety that the Middle East would be given low priority at the Moscow talks. Egyptian Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Ismail Fahmy laid the blame for the Arab-Israeli deadlock jointly on the US and the USSR, stating that the impasse could not be broken without their participation. He warned the Soviets that they would be making a major miscalculation if they thought the Arab states would accept a no-war, no-peace policy from Moscow.

Other participants voiced similar comments. One prominent writer for al-Ahram bluntly stated that Moscow prefers the no-war, no-peace situation. Another complained that US obligations to its friends in the area were stronger than Soviet responsibilities to its clients.

Cairo views the US-USSR discussion as one of its few hopes for breaking the deadlock with Israel and is deeply concerned that other issues will take priority. Egyptian suspicion that Soviet interests in the Middle East are primarily self-serving has been aired before, but not at this level. Egyptian officials may hope that publication of this dialogue will provide a warning to Moscow not to bargain away Arab interests at the summit. Domestically, the article serves as another assertion of national independence designed to dampen criticism of the regime's close ties with the Soviet Union. [REDACTED]

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25X1

22 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

~~SECRET~~

NOTES

LAOS: A resolution in the National Assembly calling for the resignation of Souvanna Phouma's government failed to come to a vote on 19 May, the first day of debate. The proposition was sponsored by right-wing politicians seeking to force Souvanna to replace some cabinet ministers; the rightists also have been pushing Souvanna to fill cabinet posts being kept open for Communists under the Geneva Accords of 1962. Several of the members who had said that they would support the resolution defected or abstained in a preliminary vote. Two new resolutions calling for some minor changes in the government have been proposed, and most politicians now appear to desire some face-saving compromise. [REDACTED]

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MALAGASY REPUBLIC: General Ramantsoa has refused student demands that President Tsiranana be removed from office. Ramantsoa evidently believes that Tsiranana still has strong popular support outside Tananarive, the capital city, which has always been the center of the president's political opposition. Ramantsoa has publicly stressed Tsiranana's role as a symbol of national unity and warned that the removal of the president could provoke a conflict among the Malagasy. The students, nevertheless, have vowed to continue their strike until Tsiranana resigns. Ramantsoa's position was strengthened over the weekend when workers, who had joined students in asking for Tsiranana's resignation, disassociated themselves from the demands and ended their six-day general strike. [REDACTED]

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WEST GERMANY: The way has been cleared for President Heinemann to sign the law ratifying the Eastern treaties tomorrow. The constitutional court on Friday refused to accept challenges brought by two individuals against the treaties, and a key Bavarian official involved in the legal preparations of another possible appeal has said flatly that his state government would not seek a court ruling on the treaties. [REDACTED]

25X1

22 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

4

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